Arrogant Kiss

Story 3

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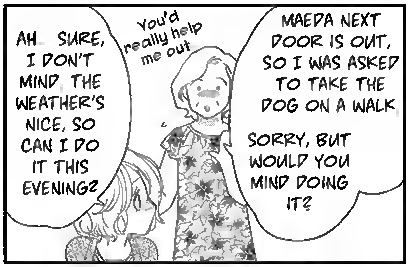
Holding My Angel

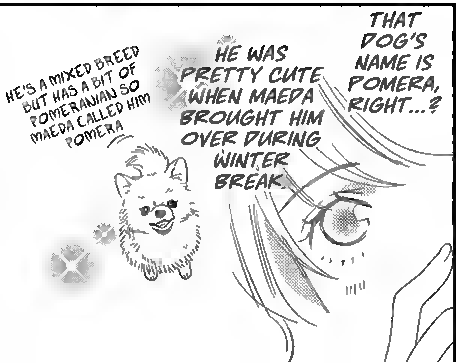
MOM, I'M HOME!
WELCOME BACK, HITOMI
HOW WAS SCHOOL?
YOU OUGHT TO COME HOME A BIT MORE OFTEN OUTSIDE OF VACATIONS
YEAH, IT'S LOTS OF FUN!
HA HA HA, YOU SEEM ENERGETIC, THOUGH
I MAY NOT SEEM HIGH TENSION,

I GOT DUMPED BY MY BOYFRIEND OF THREE YEARS,
BUT MY HEART IS SUPER PAINFUL RIGHT NOW.
"LET'S STAY TOGETHER OUR WHOLE LIFE."
WHO SAID HE'D FOUND A NEW GIRLFRIEND.
I BELIEVED HIM WHEN HE SAID THAT.
LIKE AN IDIOT.


AH... SURE, I DON'T MIND. THE WEATHER'S NICE, SO CAN I DO IT THIS EVENING?
You'd really help me out
MAEDA NEXT DOOR IS OUT, SO I WAS ASKED TO TAKE THE DOG ON A WALK.
SORRY, BUT WOULD YOU MIND DOING IT?

I'VE HAD TROUBLE KEEPING MY FEELINGS IN CHECK SINCE HE DUMPED ME.

I'M SO WEIRD...


HE'S A MIXED BREED BUT HAS A BIT OF POMERANIAN SO MAEDA CALLED HIM POMERA
HE WAS PRETTY CUTE WHEN MAEDA BROUGHT HIM OVER DURING WINTER BREAK.
THAT DOG'S NAME IS POMERA, RIGHT...?
HITOMI.

SFX: ZOOM
はうっ
HIS FACE IS THE ONLY THING LEFT THAT'S GOT A TRACE OF POMERANIAN
Aaaah!
POMERA'S WAY TOO BIG!
Ah!
SPLAT
UGH.
AH!
SFX: ZOOM
POMERA, NO!
SFX: BEEEEP

SFX: VRRM
SFX: WHAM, SCREEEEEE
どっ
WATCH IT, MORON!
ARE... YOU OKAY?
OW. I SPRAINED MY ANKLE.
I'M... SO SORRY!
THIS ISN'T MY DOG, I WAS JUST ASKED TO WALK HIM AS A FAVOR, SO...
THIS SILLY POMERA!
PANT PANT PANT
PANT
THE DOG seems okay
DON'T BLAME THE DOG
Huh?

POMERA, NO.
POMERA!
PANT
THAT'S RIGHT
POM-ERA?
That the dog's name?
AH... YEAH
GIMME THAT.
Ow
I DIDN'T THINK HE COULD EVEN BE THAT CALM.
NO WAY...
WOW
GOOD DOG
AND LOOK HOW GENTLE HIS FACE IS NOW
I WANT SOMEONE TO SOOTHE MY HEART LIKE THIS, TOO...
PANT
PANT
PANT
THAT'S IN-CREDIBLE.

THE DOG ISN'T TO BLAME HERE
YOU'RE THE ONE WHO NEEDS DISCIPLINING
GASP
WHAT IS HE...
UM... UM... PLEASE LET ME COVER YOUR DOCTOR'S BILL...
I'M... SO SORRY...
AH... RATHER THAN THAT,
CAN YOU TAKE THIS GIRL ALONG FOR ME STARTING TOMORROW, UNTIL MY FOOT IS BETTER?
PANT PANT
HIS DOG
AH... SURE.
HERE'S MY ADDRESS AND CELL PHONE NUMBER.
COME BY ABOUT THIS TIME TOMORROW.

CALL ME IF YOU DON'T KNOW HOW TO GET TO THE ADDRESS
I can't walk, so I'll call a taxi
JEEZ... THIS ISN'T SOMETHING SO BAD I SHOULD CRY ABOUT IT...
HIS NAME IS AKIZUKI JUNYA.
APPARENTLY, HE'S A FREE-LANCE PROGRAMMER WHO WORKS FROM HOME.
GOOD EVENING!
AHH!
THE DOG HATES ME!
SFX: BARK-X3

A... CEO...
SPEAK LIKE YOU'RE A CEO AND TELL HER STERNLY TO SIT.
IT'S BECAUSE YOU'RE BEING SO WISHY-WASHY THAT CASS IS UNEASY.
HEY...
GLARE
TRYING TO GIVE OFF A CEO-LIKE VIBE
CASS. SIT!
Oooh.
DOGS DON'T LET THE PAST BOTHER THEM.
DON'T YOU HOLD A GRUDGE OVER MY INJURING YOUR MASTER YESTERDAY?

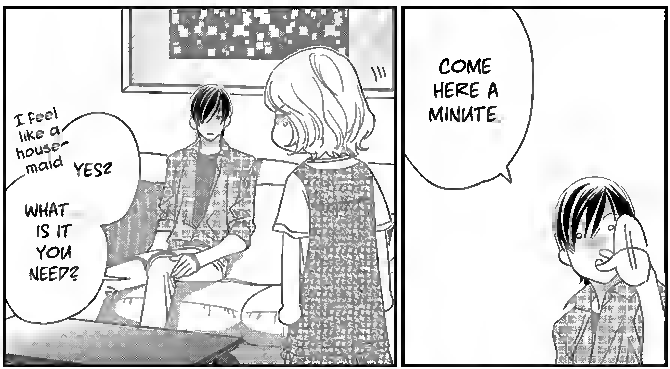
THEY'RE ALWAYS LIVING FOR THE PRESENT.
NO MATTER WHAT HAPPENED THE DAY BEFORE
LIVING FOR...
I UNDERSTAND, BUT...
MUST BE NICE TO BE A DOG.
HUMAN BEINGS ARE A LITTLE MORE COMPLICATED, HUH...?
NOT LIKE ME, WHO KEEPS BEATING HERSELF UP OVER OLD HEARTACHES...

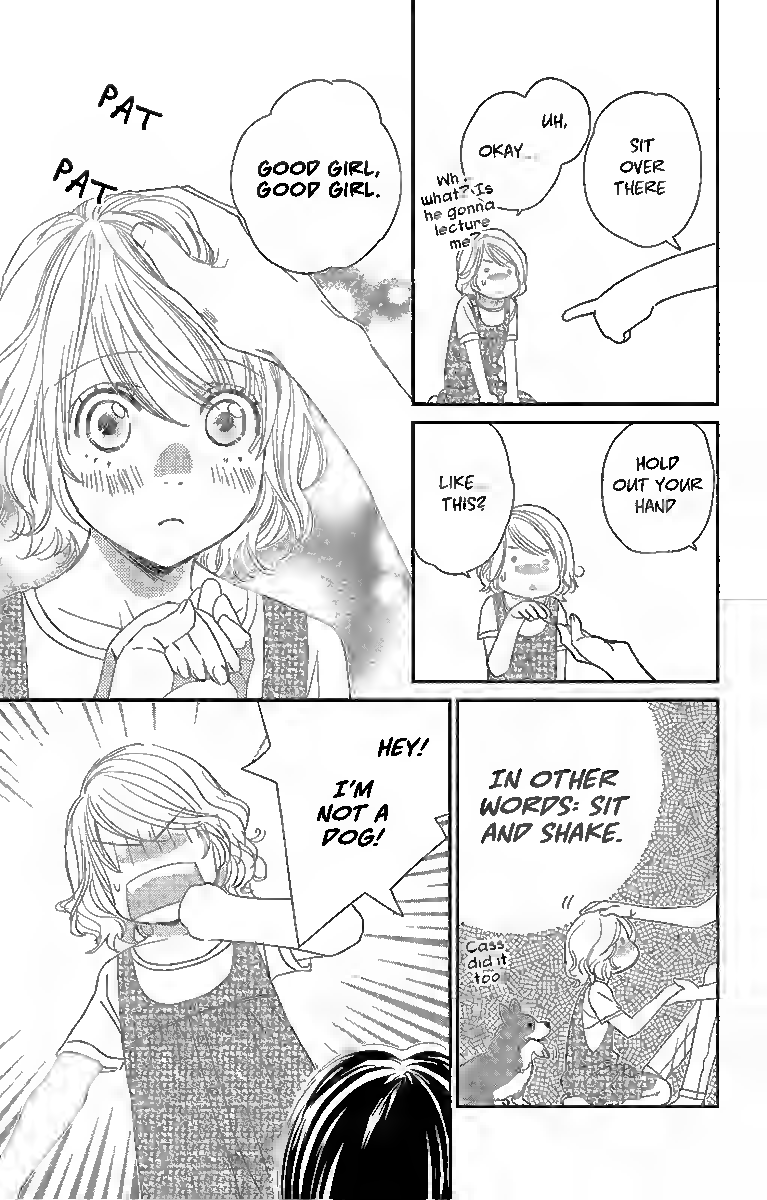
Geh.
IS THERE SOMETHING YOU'RE HAVING TROUBLE FORGETTING?
LIKE, PERHAPS,
A LOVER?
BLUSH
THAT...
HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH YOU!
I... I'M GOING NOW!
MAKE SURE YOU WALK IN FRONT OF CASS
HE'S SO DEMANDING!

HE GETS ON MY NERVES.
REALLY, EVEN THIS...?
I WISH I COULD JUST CRY,
BUT I HATE FEELING THIS WAY.
I'M BACK
THANKS HOW DID IT GO?
CASS WAS VERY WELL-BEHAVED
RUB
RUB
THEN, TOMOR-ROW...
HEY.

What?!
THAT'S NOT WHAT WE AGRE...
WHY DON'T YOU MAKE ME SOMETHING TO EAT?
SURE.
IS... CURRY OKAY?
I don't really know how to cook much
OKAY, FINE!
OWWWW...
YOU CAN MAKE WHATEVER YOU WANT WITH WHAT'S IN THE FRIDGE.
Yaaay!

"HEY, DO YOU KNOW WHAT GIVES CURRY ITS SUBTLE FLAVOR?"
IT'S BEEN A WHILE SINCE I COOKED FOR SOMEONE.
"UM, PREMADE SAUCE OR SOMETHING?"
"THAT'S JUST LIKE YOU."
"WHAT?"
HUH?
HE'S CALLING ME?
GASP
HITOMI!


I feel like a housemaid
YES?
WHAT IS IT YOU NEED?
COME HERE A MINUTE


PAT
PAT
GOOD GIRL, GOOD GIRL.
Wh-what?! Is he gonna lecture me?
UH, OKAY...
SIT OVER THERE
LIKE THIS?
HOLD OUT YOUR HAND
HEY!
I'M NOT A DOG!
IN OTHER WORDS: SIT AND SHAKE.
Cass did it too

WHAT A... WEIRD GUY.
BUT...
I GUESS IT DIDN'T FEEL ALL BAD TO BE PATTED LIKE THAT...
HA HA HA.
I'M WAITING FOR THAT CURRY.
THEN... THEN DON'T INTERRUPT ME!
IS IT OKAY TO USE WHATEVER FLATWARE YOU HAVE?
SURE

IS IT REALLY OKAY FOR ME TO BE IN HERE?
WHAT A CUTE CUP SET...
THE WINE GLASSES TOO...
Two of each.
WON'T YOUR GIRL-FRIEND OR WHOMEVER GET MAD?
COME TO THINK OF IT,
HIS APARTMENT'S REALLY CLEAN, TOO...
IS IT OKAY, CASS?
WOOF.
I GUESS HE DOESN'T HAVE ONE...
Because she's a girl. Ha ha ha!
SHE SAID IT'S FINE.

SEVERAL DAYS LATER.
GOOD EVENING!
DO YOU HAVE ANY BIG PLATES?
UH, ON THE LEFT CABINET
OH, NOT OVER THERE...
HUP
WE BOUGHT SOME WATER-MELON
WAY MORE THAN WE CAN EAT, SO I BROUGHT YOU HALF.
Here!

OOPS.
AH!
WATCH OUT!
STAGGER STAGGER
ドンッ
SFX: BU-BUMP

I GUESS ONCE HIS ANKLE'S BETTER, I WON'T NEED TO COME ANY MORE...
JUNYA SEEMS TO PAT MY HEAD...
AT EVERY OPPOR-TUNITY...
THANKS
I GUESS HE'S JUST THAT KIND OF PERSON.
IT'S A LITTLE AGGRA-VATING...
CHOMP
Huh?
CHOMP
CHOMP
AH! CASS!
THE WATER-MELON!

SEVERAL DAYS LATER.
I'LL COME ALONG FOR HER WALK TODAY TOO
MY FOOT'S NOT HURTING AT ALL
AH.
THAT'S GOOD.
SO, THEN,
YOU'RE SAYING I DON'T NEED TO TAKE HER ON WALKS ANYMORE?
YEAH.
THANKS FOR HELPING ME OUT.

I WANT TO KEEP COMING ANYWAY.
OF COURSE. I SEE NOW...
BUT I CAN'T SAY THAT...
THIS HAS ALL BEEN ONE-SIDED ON MY PART...
YOU GOT PRETTY GOOD AT WALKING THE DOG, HUH?
YOU THINK SO? ONLY BECAUSE YOU TAUGHT ME, JUNYA.
GASP
IS THAT?!
BU-BUMP
BUT NEVER MEETING HIM AGAIN!!
THAT GAVE ME A SHOCK.
OH... JUST SOMEONE WHO LOOKS LIKE HIM

I NEVER WILL.
I'LL NEVER MEET SOMEONE WHO CARES ABOUT ME.
AH, IT REALLY IS HARD...
GIVE ME THE LEASH A MINUTE.
CASS, STAY HERE FOR A MINUTE...
STRAIGHTEN YOUR BACK
LIFT YOUR CHIN
AH...
UM...

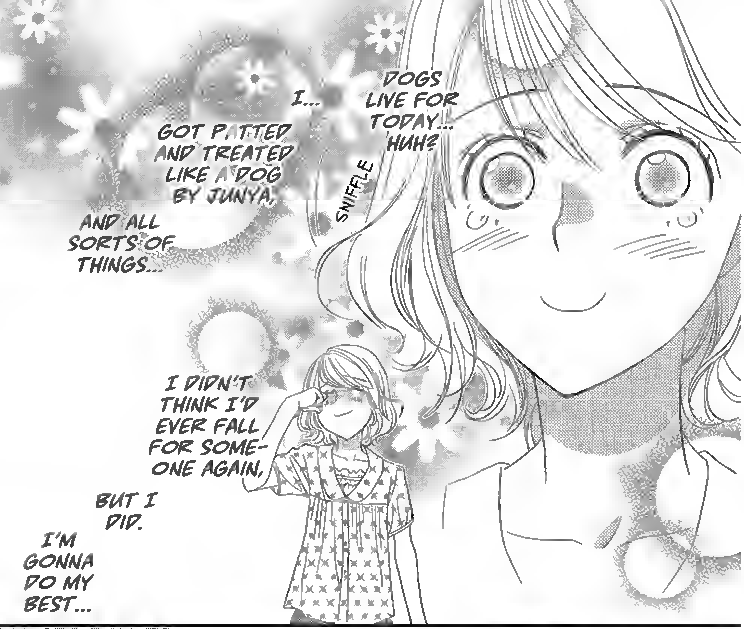
WHEN DOGS ARE FEELING ANXIOUS, THIS REALLY CALMS THEM DOWN
I BET IT WORKS FOR YOUR HEART TOO, HUH?
Dogs again?
JEEZ! HOW MANY TIMES DO I HAVE TO TELL YOU I'M NOT A DOG!
BUT YOU BECAME A LITTLE MORE FORWARD-LOOKING, RIGHT?
People are the same
Stop teasing me!
FORWARD LOOKING? WELL...
AH...
DOES THAT MEAN... PAT PAT
TREATED LIKE A DOG
JUNYA, WHY...
HE WAS ONLY DOING ALL THAT BECAUSE I LOOKED LIKE I WAS HURTING...?

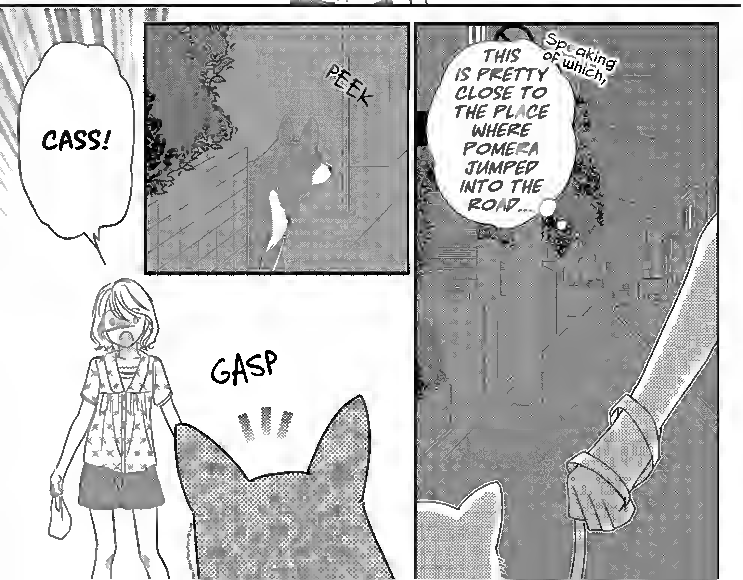
WHY ARE YOU BEING SO NICE TO ME?
HITOMI...
WHAT...
EVEN THOUGH YOUR ANKLE'S BETTER, CAN I STILL COME OVER?
I...
I'VE FALLEN FOR YOU, JUNYA.
SORRY...

I...
COULD SEE YOU WERE HAVING TROUBLE GETTING OVER SOMEONE
I WASN'T TRYING TO LEAD YOU ALONG...
BUT I...
DON'T HAVE THOSE KIND OF FEELINGS FOR YOU...
I...
I SEE.
AH, BUT...
THIS HURTS, BUT...
IT'S NOT THE SAME FEELING AS WHEN I WAS DUMPED BEFORE...
I'M GLAD YOU WERE KIND TO ME, ANYWAY.
THANK YOU.

HITOMI...
CASS...?
CASS IS GONE!
IT LOOKS LIKE SHE RAN OFF WITH HER LEASH STILL ON.
CASS...
HEY.
IT'S ALREADY LATE.
YOU GO HOME
I'LL FIND HER, SO IT'LL BE FINE
YEAH... OKAY
GOOD-BYE, JUNYA
GOOD LUCK

3 DAYS LATER.
LET'S GO, POMERA.
KEEP LOOKING FORWARD!
POMERA! YOU BECAME SO WELL-BEHAVED
YEAH...
NOBODY WOULD THINK YOU WERE THE KIND OF STUPID DOG WHO'D JUMP INTO ONCOMING TRAFFIC.
What?


I...
GOT PATTED AND TREATED LIKE A DOG BY JUNYA,
AND ALL SORTS OF THINGS...
SNIFFLE
DOGS LIVE FOR TODAY... HUH?
I DIDN'T THINK I'D EVER FALL FOR SOMEONE AGAIN,
BUT I DID.
I'M GONNA DO MY BEST...


CASS!
PEEK
GASP
Speaking of which,
THIS IS PRETTY CLOSE TO THE PLACE WHERE POMERA JUMPED INTO THE ROAD...

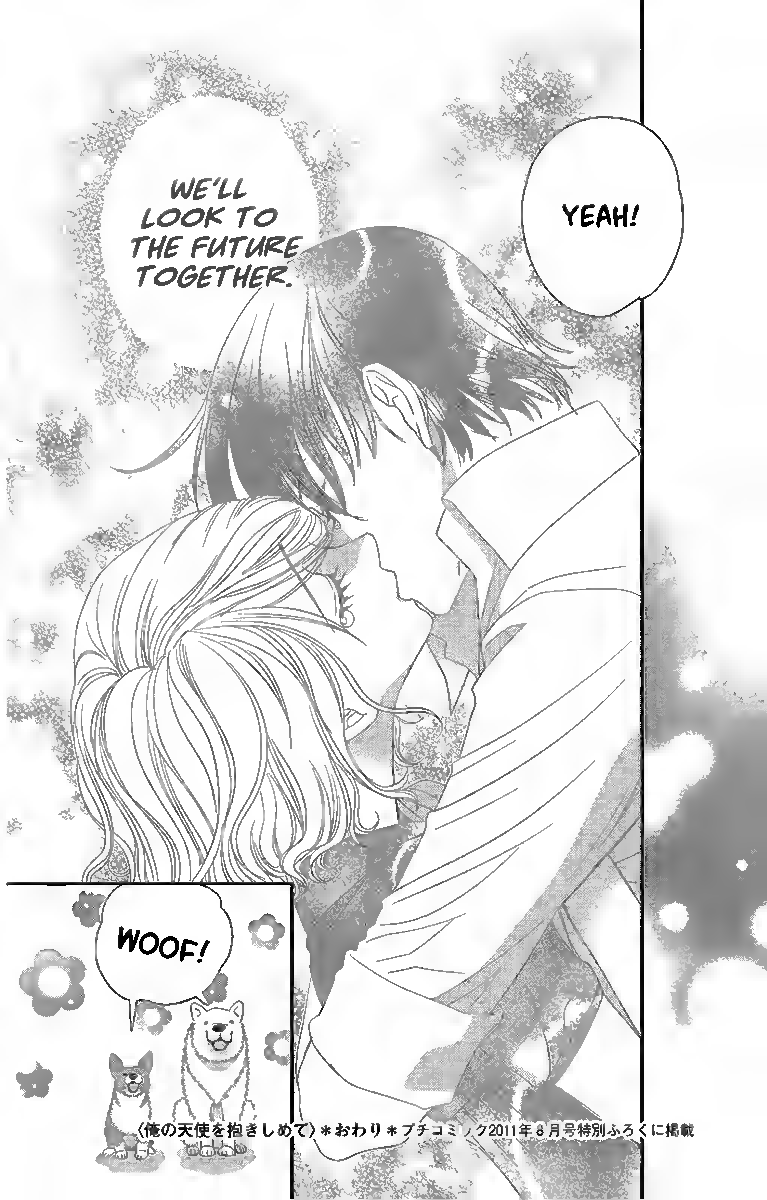
SFX: LICK X2
CASS!
WHERE DID YOU GO OFF TO, HONESTLY?
JUNYA MUST HAVE BEEN SO WORRIED...
CASS!
JUNYA
LOOK, IT'S CASS!
Oh, master!
Pomeral's here too, woof!
HITOMI...

JU...
JUNYA...
I'M SORRY.

TWO YEARS AGO...
I WAS SUPPOSED TO GET MARRIED
WHAT...?
I BOUGHT THE THINGS IN THAT ROOM IN PREPARATION, TOO...
BUT JUST BEFORE THE CEREMONY,
SHE CHANGED HER MIND...
EVER SINCE THEN,
I'VE BEEN UNABLE TO FEEL ROMANTIC LOVE...
THE THINGS I SAID TO YOU WERE WHAT THE ME FROM TWO YEARS AGO WANTED TO SAY
JUNYA...
THAT'S...
FOR SO MUCH LONGER THAN ME...

I'D INTENDED TO JUST CHEER YOU UP,
BUT THEN I THOUGHT ABOUT MY EMPTY ROOM, WITH NO ONE IN IT...
IT TURNS OUT I WAS THE ONE CURED BY YOU...
THE ONE WHO NEEDS TO LOOK TO THE FUTURE,
IS ME.

I LOVE YOU.
STAY BY MY SIDE,
HITOMI.



〈俺の天使を抱きしめて〉＊おわり＊プチコミック2011年8月号特別ふろくに掲載